



WESTERN AUSTRALIAN FURNITURE MANUFACTURERS ASSOCIATION INC.

21st September 2021

WAFMA – News Release “WA to cease logging native forests end 2023”

On the 8th of September, the McGowan Government's announced that logging in the State's native forests would cease at the end of 2023, without consulting industry or stakeholders. This effectively ends the commercial supply of Jarrah, Marri and other WA native hardwoods to WAFMA. (Western Australian Furniture Manufacturers Association Inc.) Placing most local furniture manufacturing businesses in jeopardy and several thousand employees facing unemployment. WA's native forestry ban is not backed up by science or long-term thinking. Institute of Foresters of Australia vice president Dr Michelle Freeman said that while the association welcomed the Government's commitment to plant 50 million more trees and support ongoing management to improve forest health, the singlemindedness of the decision to end native forestry was flawed.

Currently there is 2.5 million hectares of *Southwest State Forests** with 62% made up of National Parks, comprising mainly of old growth Jarrah and Karri Forests which have been preserved by previous governments. The remaining 38% comprises of re-growth forests; plantations and timber reserves which are available for logging. Less than 1% of the re-growth forests are annually harvested, this is then re-grown to ensure the timber can be harvested sustainably for future generations being an effective carbon catching ecosystem. The absolute irony of this ill-considered plan is that in importing hardwood alternatives, we will need to accept that they come from countries with little or no sustainability or environmental regulations plus the international transport resulting in a greatly increased carbon footprint.

The Government published in its media statement that they plan on spending \$350 million on new softwood timber plantations. We are uncertain who this is benefiting and how this is seen as conservation? This plan is certainly not an environmental one; pine plantations acidify the soil rendering the land unsuitable for future agriculture, their long tap roots raise the water table and increase salinity, they do not provide an ecosystem suitable for native flora and fauna and they are more susceptible to extreme bush fires than native forests. The pine currently grown locally has always been of poor quality which is why imported pine is usually specified for building projects and pine is not a viable alternative for the local hardwood furniture industry.

WAFMA shares other concerns about the government's decision to ban logging in native forests. There will be a much wider knock-on effect from this decision, far surpassing the 400 jobs that we have been told will be lost in the logging industry. Yes, this maybe a historic decision, but not as McGowan would have you believe. This will be a lesson taught in primary schools, to help show students what happens when we have too many of one party in government. History will show that a government not opposed in the senate results in poor decisions being passed. It is now up to the media to help them face public scrutiny. Today more than ever, we need individuals and associations to stand up, get social media savvy and do everything possible to help people hear the truth of this decision.

The Western Australian Furniture Manufacturers Association Inc. is an incorporated non-profit organisation representing the interests of the W.A. furniture manufacturing industry supply chain.



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The “\$50 million Just Transition Plan to support affected workers and communities” will only accommodate those directly involved in regional forestry such as; loggers, transporters and mill operators. It will not assist our; furniture trades, flooring contractors, restoration industries and the on-sellers and retailers who have loyally supported local trades. It will mean that your future tables, chairs and floorboards will not be made out of sustainable local timbers, but will all come from imported timbers. The price of locally made furniture will be out of reach of most West Australians and so we will rely more heavily on importing furniture. Businesses will close and the skill loss with this will be insurmountable with many industry and retail operations having spanned generations. The only winners in this decision will be the Chinese exporters and those involved in furniture imports. So much for employment and opportunity for West Australians. The ban on logging new forest in WA lacks the debate required by a government decision of this magnitude and the transparency for the people of Western Australia to properly judge.

And what of the skills lost? At a time when more and more consumers are asking “Where is it made”? this will see yet another industry fade into oblivion. We have a vibrant industry supported with a vital apprenticeship scheme and, up to now, an exciting and rosy future, we cannot let this disappear. (So far there seems to have been little public awareness regarding the effect of this logging ban on the local furniture industry. WAFMA released a *press statement** on the 9th September which is being forwarded to media and state members of parliament. There was also a “*Town Hall Meeting*”* in Manjimup on Monday 13th September for local businesses, workers, members of parliament and the shadow minister for forestry was there to express concerns regarding the government’s snap native forestry ban.)

The McGowan Government came into power on a promise of employment and opportunity for all West Australians, and it seems up until now they’ve been chipping away at this pledge. Navigating our state through COVID, a pandemic that many others didn’t fare so well, certainly helped them achieve better than most in terms of employment. It also rewarded the Labour party with a majority rule of power, which I’m now not sure is the win we all had in mind. Majority rule has meant that decisions can go through the senate without contest and compromise. Imagine how the GST would have affected our country had it not been for the Democrats enforcing no GST on necessity items. Contest and compromise help ‘historic’ decisions from being foolish, it gives them a balanced perspective and provides robust discussion. We are now realising exactly what absolute power we have trusted to our state government as they blind sight us into a ban on logging native forest. On the surface and with the majority of people having a passion for the environment, this decision may seem like a positive step, but it is in actual fact, the opposite. Unfortunately, with no one to oppose or demand compromise, it looks set to cost us both employment and opportunity.

**Supporting documents*